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AUTHOR Campbell, Clifton P.
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ABSTRACT

In the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, with few exceptions, occupational specialization programs for male students first become available at the secondary level (grades 10-12). Education is not compulsory, and substantial numbers drop out at all levels. Adolescents who leave school at the primary (elementary) or intermediate (grades 7-9) level must wait until age 18 before they can enroll in a vocational training center. This population is also subjected to restricted employment options because of labor regulations. Since 1973 a project to relieve young male dropouts and provide them with practical and general knowledge has been operating. Pre-Vocational Training Centers (PVCs) have been set up to provide free practical training in metalworking, electricity, welding, woodworking, and clerical subjects. Current planning envisions restructured training programs that: provide rudimentary education, limited skill development, and varied opportunities for occupational exploration; provide a firm foundation for follow-on trade specific training; and serve as a link to vocational training centers. In addition to expanding the training capacity and restructuring the program of study, innovative changes are being made in curriculum and instruction. Operational plans call for the implementation of competency-based, individualized instruction. (YLB)

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PRE-VOCATIONAL PREPARATION IN THE KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA

A Paper
Presented at
the American Vocational Association
Convention

Anaheim, California
December 1983

by

Clifton P. Campbell

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Pre-Vocational Preparation in the
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Introduction

Soon after the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was established,[1] the government undertook to organize a centrally administered general education system. However, it wasn't until 1939 that primary schools, which offered a full range of subjects, were founded. Emphasis on mass secular education began just 30 years ago when the Ministry of Education was set up. Since then the Kingdom's commitment to the improvement and expansion of education has increased at an accelerating rate.

A four stage educational structure, with boys and girls enrolled in separate schools, was adopted by the Ministry of Education. Under this arrangement children begin their schooling by attending one or two years of kindergarten. At age six they enroll in a primary (elementary) school for grades one through six. This primary stage is followed by intermediate school with grades seven, eight and nine; then secondary school where grades 10 through 12 are offered. See Table 1.

With the exception of kindergarten, students are promoted when they pass the end-of-year examination prepared and graded at the local school level. Standardized exams, written, administered and scored by representatives of the Ministry of Education, determine advancement between the intermediate and secondary stages and graduation from the secondary stage. (S. Sindi, personal communication, February 28, 1983)

With few exceptions occupational specialization programs for male students first become available at the secondary stage. See Figure 1. It should be noted, however, that the general secondary (academic) curriculum is the only route to a university education.

TABLE 1

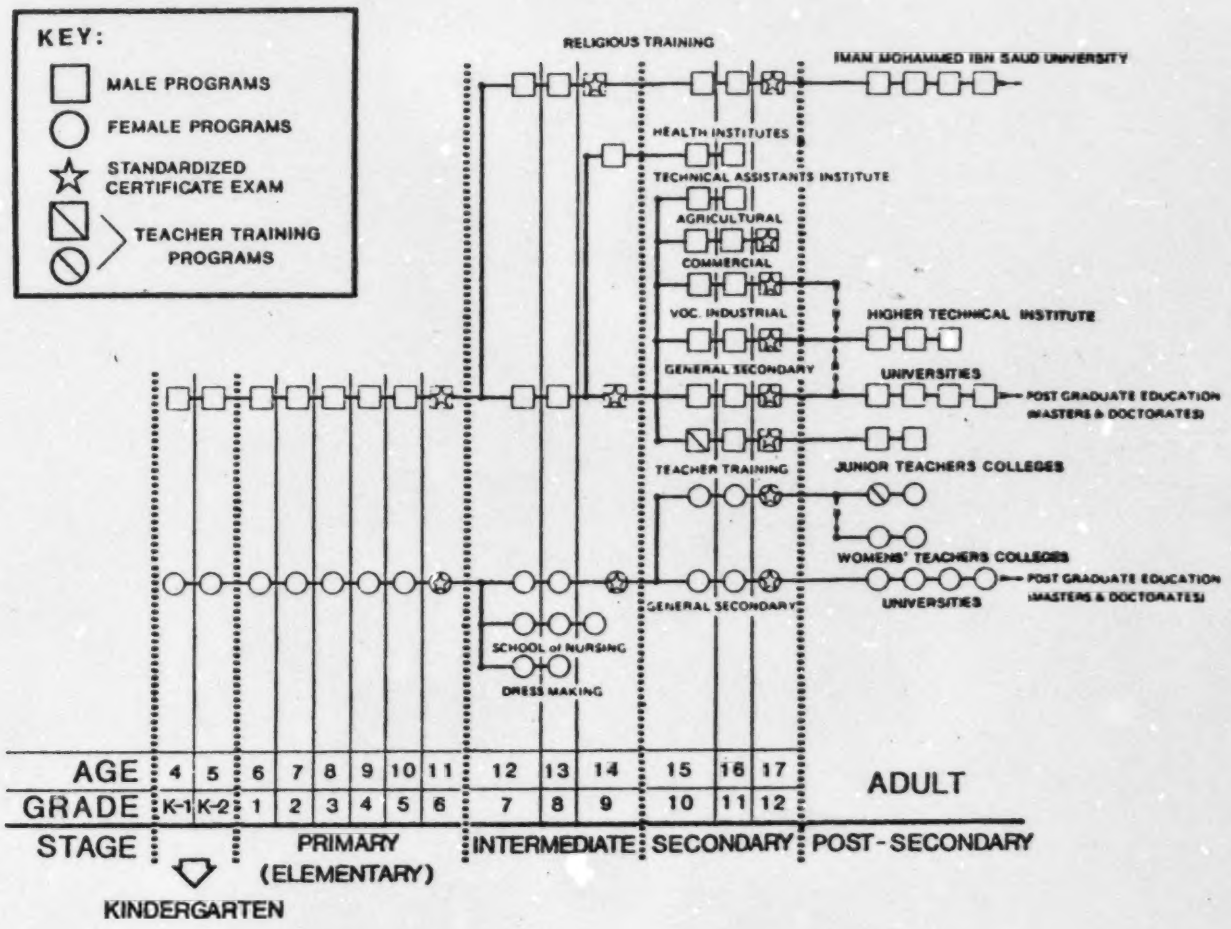
Subjects Taught Male and Female Students by Stage
in the General Education Program

STAGES	SUBJECTS TAUGHT IN BOYS' SCHOOLS	SUBJECTS TAUGHT IN GIRLS' SCHOOLS
PRIMARY (Grades 1 through 6)	Religion, Arabia language, math, history, geography and physical education	Same as boys except: delete physical education and add art
Advancement to the intermediate stage is based on 6th grade end-of-year test scores.		
INTERMEDIATE (Grades 7, 8 and 9)	Religion, Arabic language, math, history, geography, physical education and English language	Same as boys except: delete physical education and add home/child care
Advancement to the secondary stage is based on Standardized Certificate Exam scores.		
SECONDARY (Grades 10, 11 and 12)	Religion, Arabic language, math (trigonometry and calculus), geology, physical education and English language	Same as boys except: delete physical education and geology, add home/child care, cooking and sewing
Graduation from the secondary stage is based on Standardized Certificate Exam scores.		

Notes:

1. Schooling, including transportation, books, equipment and supplies is provided free to all citizens who voluntarily enroll.
2. There are presently 11,379 schools with approximately 1.5 million students and 86,000 teachers.
3. English language training begins at the intermediate stage.

EDUCATION STRUCTURE IN SAUDI ARABIA



NOTES:
1. Free schooling is provided for citizens at all stages. However, attendance is not compulsory.
2. Pre-vocational and vocational training centers are omitted from this chart because they are operated for male drop-outs and are not grade oriented.

Figure 1

General Education Structure

Unfortunately, there are no provisions for either Career Education or Industrial Arts courses in the academic program of studies at the present time.

From a modest base, schools for boys and girls began to spread throughout the Kingdom. They grew in number during the 1960's and 70's to the point where an educational facility was being opened at the rate of one a day. (Metcalf, 1974, p. 20) This rapid expansion has made free education, from kindergarten through the post-secondary stage, available to the vast majority of Saudi youth.

Education is not compulsory, however; and some juveniles, especially in rural areas, have never enrolled in school. Others drop out for economic, sociological, discipline and academic reasons. Factors that have contributed to academic failure and the drop out rate include: 1) the large number of inexperienced teachers employed to staff new schools, 2) under-qualified teachers, many of which are foreign nationals, 3) outmoded instructional techniques such as rote learning, and 4) unresponsive administrative policies and procedures.

An analysis of unpublished Ministry of Education data which provides information on failing and dropping out shows that:

- The proportion of primary school students repeating a grade for the second time ranged from 16% of all repeaters of the second grade, 14% of those in the third and fourth grades, down to 9.5% of those in the sixth grade. On the average one of every eight students (12.4%) of those repeating a class at the primary level was attending the class for the third year. Among other things this reflects strong motivaton to complete primary school. It also illustrates why nearly 5% of the fourth, fifth and sixth graders become discouraged and drop out of school.

- Age distributions of primary school students in the fourth, fifth and sixth grades indicate that sizeable numbers of drop outs in these grades are 14 years and older.
- Despite the selection-out that occurs through failure and drop out at the primary stage, large numbers of students continue to fail and repeat grades at the intermediate level. The proportion of males dropping out of intermediate school was substantial - 12 out of every hundred students registered. The age groupings of students in intermediate school place most drop outs at 14 or over.

Although these findings are based on data for the school year 1973-74, Ministry officials have concluded that a sizeable drop out rate has existed since the large scale expansion of general education began in the 1960's. More recent educational statistics, although incomplete, indicate that a considerable number of males, 14 years and older, continue to drop out.

Pre-Vocational Training

Adolescents who leave school at the primary or intermediate stage must wait until they are eighteen years of age before they can enroll in a Vocational Training Center (VTC). This population is also subjected to restricted employment options because of labor regulations intended to prevent the exploitation of juveniles.

For an underpopulated country facing serious manpower shortages, this was an unacceptable situation. In response to these conditions, the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (MLSA) set about working toward the establishment of pre-vocational training for young out of school males, 14 through 17 years of age.[2] In 1969 the MLSA began collaborating with the United Nations International

Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) in the conduct of a feasibility study re-rarding pre-vocational training. Based on the findings of this study, recommendations from several committees which addressed the problem and a joint proposal from UNICEF and the International Labor Organization (ILO), a project agreement was signed in 1972. The objectives of this project were to retrieve young male drop outs and provide them with practical and general knowledge which would improve their working career prospects and to contribute to the overall manpower needs of the Kingdom.

The three-fold purpose established for pre-vocational training was to:

- prepare trainees for re-entry into the general education system.
- provide an initial orientation in industrial and clerical skills.
- acquaint and guide trainees toward company training programs or prepare them for more extensive training at a VTC.

In 1973 the project became operational with the arrival of a UNICEF advisor. One year later a Pre-Vocational Training Center (PVC) was set up in each of three largest cities - Riyadh, Jeddah and Dammam. Restrictions imposed by the use of temporary facilities and various agreements held enrollment to a maximum of eighty trainees per center.

Out of these first 240 trainees enrolled, 194 completed the program. Three of these graduates then returned to the general education system, 105 enrolled in a VTC for additional training and 80 were employed in the private and public sectors. (Church & Zacharia, 1975, p. i) As far as can be ascertained, it appears that those who did not complete the program left for the following reasons: 1) transportation difficulties, 2) re-entry into the general education system, 3) employment opportunities, and 4) sociological reasons.

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The successful experiences encountered by the first class have encouraged other out of school youth to apply for enrollment during the succeeding years. Consequently, all three PVC's continue to provide practical training in metal-working, electricity, welding, woodworking and clerical subjects.

Classes are presently conducted on a seven hour/day basis five days per week for forty weeks.[3] Two-thirds of the 1400 hour instructional program is scheduled for practical training and the remainder is devoted to general literacy development. The center in Riyadh instituted a recreational and athletic program as well as student clubs which complemented the established instructional program . (A. Bukhary, personal communication, July 17, 1981)

Pre-vocational training is completely free and instructional materials, protective clothing, medical care and meals are provided. Bus transportation to and from each center was instituted in response to the needs of some trainees. In addition a monthly stipend is paid so that even those with a requirement for immediate income can attend. (Vocational Training, 1976, p. 1)

This opportunity for occupationally oriented learning has appealed to a number of adolescents, particularly those with four to six years of primary school. There is no record, however, of students leaving school expressly to attend a PVC. While some PVC graduates have returned to intermediate or secondary school to continue their general education, the majority over the years have enrolled in a VTC for trade specific training. A waiver is granted to sixteen and seventeen year old PVC graduates so they can immediately enroll in a VTC rather than wait until they are eighteen which is the minimum age requirement for admission.

While the pre-vocational training effort has been successful in meeting the needs of many young out of school males and assisting in the development

of a skilled workforce, shortcomings do exist. Recognizing deficiencies in both facilities and training programs, the MLSA is now: 1) increasing the quality and number of PVC's, as well as 2) restructuring programs and improving training with innovative instructional methods and materials.

Facilities

After three years in a temporary facility, the Riyadh PVC moved to a newly constructed center. Opened in 1977 this center was designed and built according to local standards, however, and now requires refurbishment and the addition of support buildings. The construction program for the Riyadh PVC includes faculty and trainee housing, a mosque, warehouse, a cafeteria and student center, as well as renovations to existing shops and classrooms.

Temporary facilities in Jeddah and Dammam are to be replaced with residential training centers. These centers have been designed and will be constructed in conformance with international standards. They are to be outfitted with state of the art equipment. This modern type of residential training center will also be built in three additional population centers. For convenience of reference, Figure 2 shows the locations of the existing and planned PVC's. Each of the five new centers will accommodate approximately 300 trainees, thus increasing the capacity for and availability of pre-vocational training.

Space allocations, electrical, mechanical and environmental control system capabilities for new shops and other facilities are in keeping with commonly accepted U.S. standards. Each shop will be a complete self-contained unit with its own storage areas, tool room, trainee lavatory and locker area, custodial closet, instructor(s) office, as well as an adjoining classroom with a media

KEY FACTS:

CAPITAL: RIYADH.

LANGUAGE: ARABIC.

FORM of GOVERNMENT: MONARCHY BASED ON THE LAWS OF ISLAM.

POPULATION: ESTIMATED 6 TO 8 MILLION. NEARLY ALL ARAB MUSLIMS.

AREA: ABOUT 725,000 SQ. MILES. EXACT BOUNDARIES ARE LARGELY UNDEFINED. COVERS MOST OF THE ARABIAN PENINSULA.

MAIN INDUSTRY: OIL. KINGDOM HAS RESERVES OF 165 BILLION BARRELS OF OIL AND 94 TRILLION CUBIC FEET OF NATURAL GAS.

Figure 2

Locations of Existing and Planned Pre-Vocational Centers

capability. Visibility into the shop from the classroom and instructor office has been emphasized. A lounge, conference room, workroom and lavatory are to be provided for use by shop instructors.

Facilities for the clerical section (Office Occupations) will include typing rooms, an office machine room, a general classroom, a language lab, instructor offices, a trainee lavatory and locker area and a conference room.

Administrative facilities will house administrative, student services, medical and other support personnel. A staff lounge and snack area, lavatories, business offices, duplicating, maintenance and repair facilities and a reception area will be provided.

Restructured Training Programs

Current planning envisions a wholesome teaching/learning atmosphere and provides for trainee support services through counseling, recreation, health care and activities to assist young men in achieving their individual potential. In addition to meeting the purposes for establishing pre-vocational training, the restructured programs will facilitate a secondary opportunity to increase the relevance of school and/or training by focusing on occupatonal exploration, informed guidance and counseling.

In the future training will be conducted six hours a day (four hours of shop and two in the classroom), five days per week for forty weeks. Although this results in 200 fewer hours of instruction than presently offered, it is felt that improvements in the program, as well as changes in the curriculum and instructional approach, will compensate somewhat.

In consideration of the relatively low educational attainment, inexperience and age of the typical trainee, the restructured PVC program is designed to

provide rudimentary education, limited skill development and varied opportunities for occupational exploration. Ideally the PVC will provide a firm foundation for follow-on trade specific training and serve as a link to vocational training centers. However, given conditions which preclude additional training, the graduate will be prepared to enter the labor force at the semi-skilled level.

Each of the six PVC's will be capable of enrolling 280 to 350 trainees in nine shops and office specialities. For purposes of organization and management, the 10 occupational categories are grouped in five clusters. Table 2 shows the shops by cluster, as well as enrollment figures and instructor assignments. The student to instructor ratio is generally 10:1 with a lead instructor designated for each shop.

Trainees will register for either the industrial or clerical section (program of study). Those in the industrial section will rotate through each of four clusters: automotive, construction, metals and electro/mechanical. After this introductory experience, they will be assisted in selecting a specific cluster in which they will specialize, receiving basic training in each of the included shops.

Students who enroll in the clerical section will receive instruction in English and Arabic typing, office machines, bookkeeping, filing and other office practices. Each trainee will experience all phases of office occupations but can specialize in one or more. English language training will also be provided since both Arabic and English are used in business, government and commerce.

Curriculum Revitalization

In addition to expanding the training capacity and restructuring the programs of study, innovative changes are being made in curriculum and instruction.

Table 2

Pre-Vocational Training Programs

	Cluster	Shops (Occupational Specialties)	Trainees per Shop	Instructors per Shop
Industrial	Automotives	Auto Mechanics	60 to 75	6
	Construction	Woodworking	20 to 25	2
		Plumbing	20 to 25	2
		Construction Electricity	20 to 25	2
	Metals	Machine Shop	20 to 25	2
		Sheet Metal	20 to 25	2
		Welding	20 to 25	2
	Electro/ Mechanical	Industrial (Commercial) Electricity	20 to 25	2
		Air Conditioning and Refrigeration	20 to 25	2
Clerical	Office Occupations	Typing Office Machines Bookkeeping and Filing English Language	60 to 75	6
		Enrollment for a PVC =	280 to 350	

NOTES:

1. Pre-vocational training is sponsored by the General Organization for Technical Education and Vocational Training. It is completely free to out-of-school Saudi males age 14-17.
2. Pre-vocational centers are located in Riyadh, Jeddah and Dammam, Saudi Arabia. Additional centers will be opened in Hofuf, Al-Qasim and Abha.
3. The intended student to instructor ratio is 10:1.

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Operational plans call for the implementation of competency based, individualized instruction. This approach has as its objective increased instructor effectiveness, as well as trainee achievement and retention. It is especially appropriate considering the cultural circumstances of Saudi Arabia and the open admissions policy in effect. As a result of open admissions, trainees generally have widely differing levels of general education, readiness, motivation and experience.

With competency based training, performance objectives are precisely stated and criterion referenced tests are developed to measure how well trainees achieve these objectives. From this curriculum development effort, flow teaching and learning activities. Instructional materials and media are also prepared and then validated against objectives. The result of this approach will be a competent graduate who can perform and a training program which is accountable.[4]

Individualized instruction will provide for the differing backgrounds and enhance the quality and productivity of training. It will permit each trainee to progress at his own rate of comprehension and learning, according to personal abilities, needs, interests and learning style. Individualized instruction removes the traditional time constraints associated with group paced training. This lets each trainee move at his own best speed. They won't be discouraged by too fast a pace nor will they be bored by a slow pace.

Competency based individualized instruction will maximize trainee and instructor potential. Instructors will have move time for remedial work, enrichment, counseling and other functions which require their special skills. This approach also permits greater utilization of facilities and equipment. It works and it is accountable. However, it requires a considerable developmental investment

in preparing instructional materials such as learning packages and media which are sensitive to the culture.[5] (Campbell & Bukhary, 1979, p. 50)

The availability of learning packages, fortified by appropriate media, provides a range of multi-sensory training options for attaining performance objectives. This should contribute to heightened interest and increased motivation, thereby, promoting learning and student retention. In addition to attending to literacy problems and different learning styles, instructional media can help alleviate the shortage of expert instructors. Media featuring the best qualified instructor provides busy, over extended or inexperienced faculty members with an efficient means of delivering a skill or knowledge lesson whenever and as frequently as required.

In the barest terms, there are a number of essential components in the teaching/learning process - facilities, equipment, instructional materials and people. Out of an enlightened combination of these components the experience of learning is being fashioned for young out of school males in pre-vocational training centers. The intent is to restore learning to what it should be - the most natural process in the world.

Footnotes

[1]King Abd al-Aziz, known in the West as Ibn Saud, established the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in 1932. In 1933 he granted an oil concession to what is known as the Arabian American Oil Company (ARAMCO). Formerly owned by Exxon, Texaco, Socal and Mobil, ARAMCO's assets were fully purchased by Saudi Arabia in March 1980.

[2]Vocational training conducted by the Public Organization for Vocational Training and Technical Education functions independently from the general education system. Trainees are seldom referred by schools and the principal means of recruitment is through television, radio and newspaper advertisements.

[3]Religious observance is on Friday in Saudi Arabia; consequently, classes run Saturday through Wednesday.

[4]One of the benefits of this approach is that learners are successful and want to continue training. On the other hand, some learners, deprived of the competition stimulus, may achieve less. However, competition is not a prevailing tendency of the Saudi student.

[5]Among the reasons for producting learnign packages is the lack of training materials printed in Arabic - the language of instruction.

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